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## HIGHLIGHTS

### Saga of India



### Saga of Vishnu



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*Founded by*

**B. Nagi Reddi and Chakrapani**

## **Where is the time... to read?**

The last word is yet to be heard on the controversy whether there has been a steady decline in the reading habit in children. Three decades ago, parents blamed the TV; they said, they found it difficult to wean their children away from sitting glued to the TV. Where then was the time to read? they asked. Remember, here reading refers to reading books other than text-books. What the parents forgot was, TV was a novelty in most homes in India during the first ten or fifteen years of its advent. Moreover, when they themselves managed to find time to watch the TV, how could they blame their children when they did not provide alternative forms of entertainment to suit their tastes?

A survey was conducted in the then Soviet Union in the seventies, and the finding went in favour of children! The survey found that the TV was really capable of arousing curiosity in children who would satiate their desire for more information or knowledge with the help of books. The study was a revelation to parents, authors, and publishers.

Of late, parents have started faulting the computer, internet, and other electronic devices for diverting the children's attention from books. Of course, they do 'read', but they read what is appearing on the computer screen. The question is repeated: where is the time for them to read books? Two kinds of reports should disturb the parents. One, the internet can sometimes dish out information which they themselves would not want their children to receive. Two, by spending hours in front of computers, the children impair their eyesight; they spoil their health.

Recently two metropolises in India had fortnight-long book fairs where children were found clamouring for books. That was enough to dispel any doubt in parents whether their wards were no longer crazy about books, or whether they had forgotten their reading habit.

Books are here to stay—no doubt about this.

# NEWS FLASH



## 1,000-year controversy

Actually, the controversy did not last for a thousand years; it lasted just one year. The doubt was about the new millennium — whether the third millennium had started on the first day of January 2000, or a year later on 1 January 2001. An end to the controversy came about when the famous science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke categorically stated that the “real beginning” of the 3rd millennium was on 01.01.01! In his view, those who insisted on observing 1 January 2000 as the birth of a new millennium were in a bit of a hurry! Ever since the “celebrations” on the last day of 1999 and the first day of 2000, Mr Arthur

Clarke had been “deluged” with requests for a clarification. Let us hope there would not be a similar confusion when the next thousand years rush towards the last day of year 2999 or, more correctly, of year 3000.

## Six days of sneezing

A 13-year-old boy, living in Morocco, had a bout of sneezing — he sneezed 1,100 times in the course of six days — on some days even 200 times. Creating a record was not his aim, but the doctors who were flabbergasted recorded it as a strange happening. They tried their best to stop the sneezing and succeeded only when they made him sleep with the help of medicines. Achchoo! Who was it?



## From one millennium to another

Eleven sky divers jumped from the 390 metres tall — the highest in the world — Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, during the last minutes of year 2000. When they touched ground, it was already 2001! The divers came from the USA, Germany, Sweden, and Saudi Arabia.

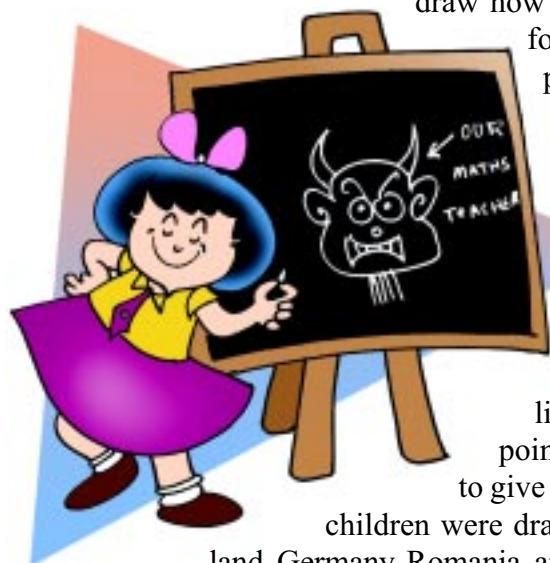


## A swimming feat

This took place in the backwaters of Kerala. Twenty-one-year old Shyam Prabodhini had his legs tied together and his arms tied in front. In one leap, he was in the water and then he swam 3 km in 19 minutes. When he came out of the water, the ropes used for tying the limbs were still tight. The thousand strong crowd, who held their breath as they watched the hazardous feat, rose in one exulted cheer as Shyam was brought back to the shore.

## A negative image

It is simple arithmetic that helped Arthur Clarke to arrive at a solution to the millennium mystery. Probably you all would like to learn mathematics from him, and not your teacher. Researchers attached to a university in England thought of a unique study: suspecting that children invariably do not like their mathematics teachers, they prompted some 300 children of 12 and 13 years to draw how their teachers appeared to them. Except for a few, the portraits were not very complimentary to them! Some of the prominent features were bald heads, beards, spectacles, wrinkles on their foreheads, a scowl on their faces, and a pair of fear-



some horns! Some of the remarks made by the children included: “mathematicians have no friends, except other mathematicians”; “they are short-tempered”; “they have no social life”; “they force children to do sums at gun-point” etc, etc. The researchers are now trying to give a better image to maths teachers. The 300

children were drawn from Britain, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, Romania, and the USA.



# The Kutch Quake

January 26, when India celebrates its Republic Day, an event keenly looked forward to by people all over the country. Every state, city, town, and district headquarters as usual got ready for the big day. And thousands and millions of people gave expression to their patriotism, pride, and joy as they personally attended the celebrations in their areas or watched the spectacle on their TVs. Every state except Gujarat, which was struck by tragedy of a magnitude unknown in its history for the past five thousand years.

Hours before the celebrations, an earthquake destroyed several cities and towns, wiping out human lives, a count of which is still being made by the hour, as this piece goes to press. Millions have been rendered homeless, as their homesteads — whatever their size and shape be — have crumbled down like a pack of cards. Thousands have either escaped or been rescued with injuries, minor and serious. Thousands of others are reported missing, not to speak of thousands of children who have become orphans.

The worst affected places, according to reports coming after three days of the calamity, are Bhuj, and other towns in Kutch district like Anjar, Rapar, and Bhachau, one-time capital of the state Ahmedabad, and several nearby areas. The epicentre of the quake is said to be the Rann of Kutch which, being a vast marshy land, passed on the tremor to regions south of the Rann.

News has been received that the most revered Dwaraka temple is damaged; the historical museum in Bhuj has been destroyed; many historical monuments have vanished without a trace. Massive rescue operations and rehabilitation efforts are going on in Gujarat on a war footing. Help in the shape of volunteers, medicines and other essential articles, and financial aid is pouring in.

Cyclones, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes have no respect for human lives. While developments in science and technology are capable of warning us of some of the calamities mentioned above, earthquakes cannot be predicted. Hence the magnitude of the devastation.

Let us all rise as one man and go to the help of our brethren in that unfortunate state by contributing our mite to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (C/o. P.M.'s Office, New Delhi - 110 011) and strengthening his hands at this hour of national calamity.

**PUBLISHER**



New tales of  
King Vikram  
and the Vetala

## The Strange Accusation

Dark was the night and fearsome the atmosphere. Frequent showers were punctuated by fierce gusts of wind. Jackals howled and an eerie laughter was heard. Flashes of lightning revealed ghostly faces.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree again and brought the corpse down. Throwing the corpse astride his shoulders, he began to cross the desolate cremation ground.



Suddenly, the vampire that possessed the corpse said: “O King, most probably you are doing this to help one of your well-wishers. But you ought to remember that the well-wisher might one day accuse you of treacherous and ungrateful conduct. Let me explain what I mean through an apt story. It will also help you forget your strain during this dark and lonely night.”

The vetala then began the narration: Two friends, Basudev and Padmanabh lived in a village. The latter’s wife died, leaving a baby son behind. Soon afterwards Padmanabh himself took to his

bed, struck by a fatal illness.

Before dying, Padmanabh told Basudev: “Please take care of my son Ravi after my death.”

“Don’t you worry, my friend, I promise to look after Ravi like my own son,” said Basudev.

After Padmanabh died, Basudev proved true to his word. He brought up Ravi along with his own son, Shekhar. He treated both boys in the same way. In fact, Ravi often did not even remember that he was not Shekhar’s own brother.

After the two boys completed their studies in the local school, Basudev sent them to the town for further studies. Shekhar was older



than Ravi by a year. Naturally, Basudev sent their monthly allowance to Shekhar.

It was unfortunate that Shekhar soon fell into bad company. He took to gambling and drinking. Ravi tried to warn and advise him, but it was of no use.

Ravi did think of telling Basudev about the change in Shekhar's ways, but on second thoughts he did not. After all, Shekhar was like a brother to him and he did not want to sadden Basudev. Besides, Shekhar had all

the money and gave him his share every month, so he did not want to make him angry.

Once Ravi and Shekhar came home. Shekhar gave Basudev the impression that he was doing well in his studies and all was well. Ravi kept quiet.

The day the two boys were to return to the town, a wad of notes was missing from Basudev's box. Everyone thought that one of the two boys must have taken the money. They were questioned. Instantly, Shekhar pointed his





finger at Ravi: “Ravi, you could have asked father for money instead of stealing! This is too bad!”

Ravi was too shocked to protest immediately. He knew that Shekhar had stolen the money and he was about to say so. But just then Shekhar said again: “Too bad, Ravi, too bad!”

Basudev looked at Ravi with disappointment. “I’m sorry for you, Ravi. Keep the money since you need it. But I’ve lost all faith in you!” he exclaimed.

The two youths were back in the town. Shekhar resumed his evil habits. One night, he had a quarrel with a gambler in the latter’s den. There was a fight. A strong blow from Shekhar killed the gambler.

Shekhar was arrested. Basudev was informed of the incident and he came rushing to the town. Only then did he come to know how

Shekhar had gone astray for a long time. In the court Ravi declared that Shekhar was with him at the time of the gambler’s death. But the judge did not accept the alibi. There was overwhelming proof of Shekhar killing the gambler. The judge convicted Shekhar to a long term in prison.

People who knew that Ravi had tried his best to save Shekhar were all praise for him. Ravi expected that Basudev, too, would be pleased with him. But, to his surprise Basudev looked very upset.

“Don’t show your face to me. You are a foe to a friend. You cowardly and treacherous fellow, you’re an enemy to society! Alas, your crime is unpardonable!” Basudev burst out.

Basudev returned to his village.

The Vetala concluded the narration and then challenged King Vikram: “Is it not intriguing that

Basudev should be furious with Ravi? Wasn't Ravi a gentle youth who, though he suffered at the hands of Shekar, put up with him so patiently? Didn't he try to save Shekhar from punishment? How can Basudev's strange accusation be justified? Answer me, O King, if you can. If, however, you keep quiet, despite knowing the answer, your head will roll down your shoulders."

King Vikram answered immediately. "Basudev's wrath was entirely justified. Each epithet he used was rightly applicable to Ravi. Had Ravi been a true well-wisher of Shekhar, he would have brought his waywardness to Basudev's knowledge. He ought to have done so, at least when he himself failed to mend Shekhar's

ways. He kept quiet because the string of the purse remained in Shekhar's hands. By allowing his friend to go astray, he proved himself a foe. He was sure that it was Ravi who had stolen Basudev's money. His silence was a sign of cowardice. It was in a sense treachery, too, for he betrayed the faith that Basudev had in him. His false statement before the judge showed that he did not hesitate to mislead the course of justice. Law and justice are some of the pillars on which society rests. By uttering a lie in the court, he proved himself an enemy to society."

No sooner had the king given his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip! The king drew his sword and went after the vampire.







**Many Horizons —  
Ruskin Bond**

## Booby in a trap

The baby elephant was not out of place in our home in north India because India is where elephants belong and, in any case, our house was full of pets brought home by Grandfather who was in the Forest Service. But the cassowary bird was different. No one had ever seen such a bird before — not in India, that is. Grandfather had picked it up on a voyage to Singapore, where he had been given the bird by a rubber-planter who had got it from a Dutch trader, who himself had got it from someone in Indonesia!

Anyway, it ended up at our home in Dehra, and seemed to do quite well in the sub-tropical climate. It looked like a cross between a turkey and an ostrich, but bigger than the former and smaller than the latter: about five feet in height. It was not a beautiful bird, nor even a friendly one, but it had come to stay, and everyone was curious about it, especially the baby elephant.

Right from the start, the baby elephant took a great interest in the

cassowary, a bird unlike any found in the Indian jungles. He would circle round the odd creature and diffidently examine with his trunk the texture of its stumpy wings; of course, he suspected no evil, and his childlike curiosity encouraged him to take liberties which resulted in an unpleasant experience.

Noticing the baby elephant's attempts to make friends with the rather morose cassowary, we felt a bit apprehensive. Self-contained and sullen, the big bird responded only by slowly and slyly raising one of its powerful legs, all the time gazing into space with an innocent air.

We knew what the gesture meant; we had seen that treacherous leg, raised on many an occasion, suddenly shooting out with a force that would have done credit to a vicious camel. In fact, camel and cassowary kicks are delivered in the same way, except that the camel kicks backward like a horse and the bird forward! We wished to spare our baby elephant a painful experience and led him away from the

bird. But he persisted in his friendly overtures, and one morning he received an ugly reward. Rapid as lightning, the cassowary hit straight from the hip and knee joints, and the elephant ran squealing to Grandmother.

For several days he avoided the cassowary, and we thought he had learnt his lesson. He crossed and recrossed the compound and the garden, swinging his trunk, thinking furiously.

Then, about a week later, he appeared on the verandah at breakfast time in his usual cheery, childlike fashion, sideling up to the cassowary as if nothing had happened. We were struck with amazement at this and so, it seemed, was the bird.

We wondered, had the painful lesson already been forgotten, and that too by a member of the elephant tribe noted for its ability never to forget? Another dose of the same medicine would serve the booby right.

The cassowary once again began to draw up its fighting leg with sinister determination. It was nearing the true position for the master-kick, kung-fu style, when all of a sudden the baby elephant seized with his trunk the cassowary's other leg and

pulled it down.

There was a clumsy flapping of wings, a tremendous swelling of the bird's wattle, and an undignified getting up, as if it were a floored boxer doing his best to beat the count of ten. The bird then marched off with an attempt to look stately and unconcerned, while we at the breakfast-table were convulsed with laughter.

After this the cassowary gave the baby elephant as wide a berth as possible. But they were not forced to co-exist for very long. The baby elephant, getting bulky and cumbersome, was sold to a zoological garden where he became a favourite with young visitors who loved to take rides on his back.

As for the cassowary, he continued to grace our verandah for many years, gaped at but not made much of, while entering on a rather friendless old age.



# Saga of India

Glimpses of a great civilisation – its glorious quest for Truth through the ages



## 14. Royal power versus Spiritual power



“Great, indeed, was Vasishtha,” observed Sandip, “but, Grandpa, how do you explain Vishwamitra’s conduct? How can a sage even think of harming another sage?”

Once again Professor Devnath and his two grandchildren were out for a leisurely stroll.

“Well, brother, don’t you behave like a sage in front of Father, your teachers, and when some guests are around? And, don’t you act like a savage to me?” remarked Chameli, while pouring tea for the professor from the flask she had thoughtfully brought along for her grandfather.

Professor Devnath had a hearty laugh. “Well, Chameli, you’ll agree that there are at least two ways of looking at every situation. You can say – Sandip is a sage, yet at times he acts like a savage! What a pity! You can change your outlook and also say – Sandip is a savage, yet he can act like a sage. How wonderful!”

“Did you hear him? That’s called wisdom,” said Sandip giving a tender twist to his sister’s ear.

“Of course this is wisdom, but you recognize this as wisdom only because it is helpful to you at this moment – and you do so without



stopping to be a savage,” said Chameli, warding Sandip’s hand off her ear.

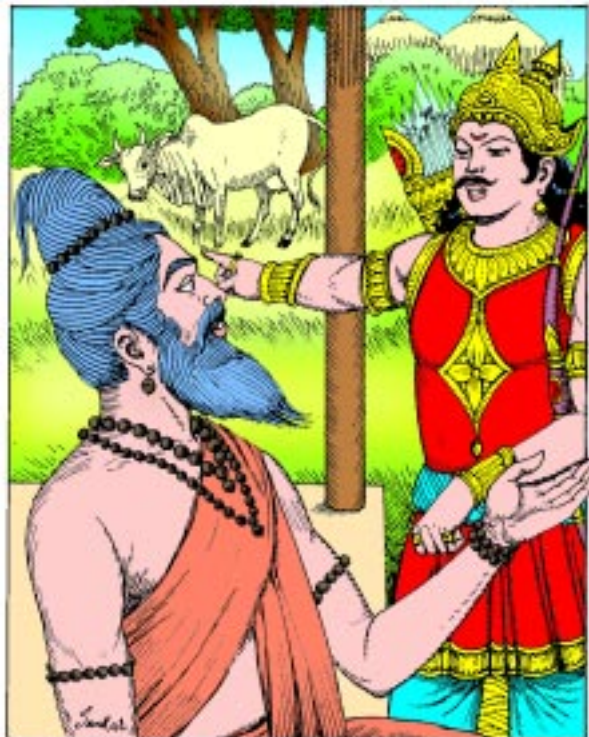
“Alas, my friends, the sage and the savage can be there in the same person – though not always. For a long time this was true so far as Vishwamitra was concerned. He grew up to be a greater sage later and if he still appeared to be unkind at times, that was only an appearance,” said the professor.

“Was there something special in Vishwamitra’s life to justify his haughty conduct, just as we can trace my brother’s wickedness to his being pampered by all of us?” queried Chameli.

“There was enough in Vishwamitra’s life to explain his haughtiness, if not to justify it,” said Grandpa, and he narrated a story:

Vishwamitra, to begin with, was neither a seeker after truth nor a scholar who had studied scriptures. He was no commoner but a king. He ruled his kingdom, Kanyakubja, as a good ruler should, but he was an egotist as many belonging to his class were.

One day, out hunting, he entered a hermitage on the banks of a river. It belonged to Vasishtha, the illustrious sage. The sage received the king most affectionately and entertained him to delicious dishes, the like of which the king had never tasted. How could a hermit fetch for him, and so soon, such delicacies? No wonder the king



was curious.

Someone pointed out to him a lovely looking cow grazing along the river-bank. “That is Nandini, the cow with divine virtues; it is she who provides the hermit whatever he wishes to have, though he rarely wishes for anything,” the king was told.

What a waste – thought Vishwamitra – that a wish-fulfilling cow should be with somebody who had no wish for prosperity, no desire for conquest of other lands! Nandini should be his! There was no end to *his* needs, and he could make proper use of a cow that performed miracles!

He asked Sage Vasishtha to gift the cow to him. But the sage expressed his inability to do so. The



will of Nandini herself was important, and there was no possibility of her abandoning a hermitage in favour of a royal palace.

Vishwamitra grew furious. How dare a poor hermit refuse to oblige him? He ordered his bodyguards to lead the cow away forcibly. Lo and behold! His men could not even approach Nandini. Something invisible threw them off.

The king went away only to come back with a large army. Alas, his army was routed by a mysterious army which seemed to descend like a bolt from the blue.

Humiliated and infuriated, King Vishwamitra lay stunned for a long time. He then realised that Vasishtha had thwarted his efforts not by any human force but by his mighty

spiritual power. He decided to forsake his throne and devote himself to *tapasya* or ardent spiritual pursuits. He gained much, but his king-like pride did not leave him, for, it is never easy for anyone to rise over one's own nature.

It is the kingly pride – a strong desire to have one's way at whatever cost — that once made him do something daring. There was a prince named Satyavrata. Nicknamed Trisanku – one who had committed three great sins – he had been exiled by his father because of his cruelty towards his subjects.

There was a famine while the prince was in the forest. Vasishtha was engrossed in penance and there was nobody to take care of his wife and children who lived in a small hut. Trisanku felt pity for them and took care of them. Vasishtha, back from his penance, was very pleased with Trisanku.

Meanwhile, Trisanku's father had revoked his order against his son and, after crowning him the king, had himself retired to the forest. Trisanku proved himself a most ideal ruler.

Before long King Trisanku developed an unusual ambition. He wished to go to heaven while he was still alive. He asked Vasishtha to help him achieve his desire. But Vasishtha told him that there was no way for anyone to ascend heaven physically.

Trisanku now approached

several other seers to help him fulfil his desire, but all of them expressed their inability to do so. At last he found a ready promoter in Vishwamitra. He was probably looking for an occasion to prove his merits.

He performed a Yajna and, applying his spiritual powers, sent Trisanku towards heaven. Trisanku almost reached the gates of that coveted world, but was pushed down by the gods.

As he came down in a plunge, he shouted for Vishwamitra. The sage looked up and shouted “Stop!” Trisanku came to a halt. The mighty Vishwamitra then invoked his spiritual powers and created a new heaven for Trisanku.

Sandip and Chameli, who listened to the story with bated breath asked, “Is Trisanku’s heaven still there?”

“No, he was, before long,

admitted to the real heaven. These episodes are not to be taken as mere stories. They have much significance hidden in them. It shows that spiritual powers can be much greater than physical powers. Secondly, while many ascetics looked upon the body as a hindrance to spiritual attainment, there were daring souls who thought that the body, too, deserved the treatment which the spirit deserved. The body, too, has a heavenly future. Well, what a daring soul thinks today may become a reality tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” asked an amused Sandip.

“The tomorrow I speak of means a new era – when man’s consciousness becomes so pure that the characteristics of the body itself would change.”

“That means, first we have to develop a glorious consciousness. Am I right?” asked Chameli.

“Absolutely right, my little girl!” said the professor, hugging the two bright grandchildren.

**- Viswvasu**







“Can’t you sing a more soothing song?” King Mahesha asked his favourite musician while nursing his throbbing forefinger. The pain and touch of fever had made the usually sweet-tempered king very tetchy. The singer sighed and started on his fourth song for that evening.

“Oh! Go away!” shouted the king after a short while. “You aren’t helping me at all. Send Sundar to me. Maybe his conversation will help me bear this pain.”

Sundar was the king’s closest friend and adviser. He could talk the king out of any bad mood. The king welcomed Sundar with a glum face as he came in.

“What’s worrying you, your majesty?” asked Sundar with concern. He had never seen the king look so unhappy.

“These quacks who call

themselves doctors say they have to cut this finger off. The sore on it is not getting better. They say if they allow it to continue, my whole body will be full of poison and I’ll die.”

“It’s all for the best, your majesty. I would listen to the doctors,” was Sundar’s reply.

King Mahesha was taken aback and not a little upset. He expected words of comfort and sympathy from his adviser, not such an indifferent answer.

Anyway, seeing there was no other way out, the king gave in to his doctors and his finger was amputated.

A few weeks later, the king and Sundar went riding in the forest near the capital. The king was still smarting at Sundar’s words and his reaction to the doctor’s advice. He had not forgiven him.

“So, you think having four fingers

in one hand is good?” he asked Sundar, rather tartly.

“I didn’t say that, your majesty,” said Sundar. “I had only said everything would work out for the best.”

The king got incensed. He thought Sundar was most disloyal and indifferent to him. Blind with anger, he pushed him down a steep cliff that they were walking past just then.

Poor Sundar, all this happened so suddenly that he was taken by surprise. Luckily, the side of the cliff was thickly wooded and he managed to hold on to the branch of a tree as he fell. After getting his breath back, he set about finding his way up the cliff side.

In the meantime, King Mahesha continued his walk into the forest without a thought for his companion or his fate. He was still feeling upset with Sundar. He strode along the forest path briskly, thinking about Sundar’s disloyalty, and did not really pay attention to where he was going. He took a turning that led him into a strange and unfamiliar area in the forest. As he stood uncertainly near a clearing, wondering which way to go, a man clothed in a deer skin jumped on him and held him by the shoulders. The man’s face was all painted over in strange colours; and he had a rather nasty looking spear in his hand.

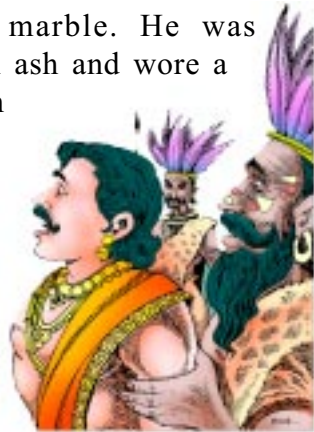
King Mahesha tried to pull himself

together. “Do you know who I am?” he asked. “I’m the king of this country. And that includes this forest.”

As he spoke, ten more men jumped into the clearing from the trees. His words had no effect on the men. They just looked at King Mahesha strangely and dragged him into the forest till they came to another clearing. A rather old man stood in front of a slab of white marble. He was covered in ash and wore a tiger skin around his hips.

King Mahesha had a terrible feeling about all this. Two of the men,

who had dragged him there, picked up a piece of rope and started tying him up. At that point, King Mahesha started babbling in panic waving his hands. He told them about himself and his wealth. “Let me go!” he gibbered. “I’ll give you all my money. I’ll make sure the forest is untouched. No one will disturb you or take away the wealth of the forest. Oh my God! This must be punishment for what I did to Sundar. My friend Sundar is close by. He will be here now and will bring the army and if you don’t let me go, they will kill you all with their



superior weapons.”

The men did not react to his words at all. They were looking at his hands strangely. Then they pointed to his missing finger and said something to the old man who came up and looked at King Mahesha’s hand with the missing finger and then shrugged his shoulders. The men immediately untied King Mahesha and let him off. The old man asked him to go, saying, “You’re flawed. Our gods will not accept a man who is incomplete.”

King Mahesha was so relieved at being let off that he did not even mind being called a flawed man. He ran away from there as fast as he could, and went straight to the place where he had pushed Sundar off the cliff. As

he got there he found Sundar clambering on to the path from the cliff side, all dirty and dishevelled. He ran up to him. “O Sundar! I’m so sorry. You were absolutely right. It was all for the best. If I hadn’t lost the finger, I would have lost my life today! I’m so sorry I got angry and pushed you off the cliff, and I’m so happy you didn’t get hurt.” And he told him the story of his adventure.

Sundar now burst out laughing. He laughed till the tears streamed down his cheeks. He then looked at the puzzled king and gasped out, “Indeed, your majesty, it is all for the best. If you hadn’t pushed me down the cliff, those men would have sacrificed me, instead!”

*-Uma Raman*





## Stories from other lands (Japan)



# The man who never believed in ghosts

*Many years ago, there were story-tellers in Japan who wandered from place to place on bicycles with 'packs' of stories. The packs had drawings on large picture cards, with the story written behind the pictures. The story-teller would use loud wooden clappers to let the children in the area know that he had come. He also usually sold sweets. Whenever he gathered an audience, the story-teller would stop, sell his sweets, and tell his stories. He would show the pictures one by one in a small wooden box-like theatre. The box had slits on the sides through which the teller could push in and pull out his pictures. The teller would read out or at least use what was written behind the pictures to act out or narrate the story. This kind of story-telling, called Kamishibai or 'paper theatre' in Japanese, was very popular some 50 or 60 years ago, but died down after the coming of television. Now people are discovering its charm once again. The story given below was told by Cathy Spagnoli, a professional story-teller, who tells stories to children all over the world.*

A long time ago, in far away Japan there was a fisherman. Every evening he would go to the bar beside a lovely

garden, sit down with his friends, and talk over a drink or two. After a pleasant evening, he would go home



and eat his simple meal of fish and rice. Then he would lie down on a soft *tatami* mat and go to sleep. Life was simple and uneventful.

One day, the fisherman and his friends as usual sat at the bar talking over a glass of *sake* or rice wine, when the talk turned to ghosts.

“Ach!” said the fisherman. “There are no such things as ghosts. It’s just people imagining things when they have had too much to drink.”

“Maybe so,” said one of his friends. “But I’ve heard that my aunt’s cousin saw a ghost and was frozen into a stone with fear. I don’t believe a word of it myself, but that’s what my aunt says.”

“I’ve heard that the magic fox that wanders unseen can trick a man into seeing things and rob him of his senses,” said a stranger who had joined them that evening.

Many others in the group had aunts or uncles or friends or friends’ friends who had seen ghosts or the magic fox that waited all the time to trick people. Some of them had lost their voices or even their senses afterwards. But none of these stories had any effect on the fisherman. He was as certain as ever that there were no ghosts, spirits or magic foxes in the world.

A few days later, the fisherman went to a new bay to try out a new fishing rod. He had heard from someone that there was good fishing to be had there. However, he had no luck at all. Finally, when it got dark, he thought it was time to go home and he pulled his line out of the water. He had to walk through a wood he did not know very well. It was a dark, moonless night and he hurried home feeling uneasy for some reason. As he made his way, he saw a light at a distance. For a moment he was frightened, thinking of thieves and robbers. Then he thought no thief would advertise his presence with a lantern and so he went on boldly.

As he got closer he saw that it was a young girl with a lantern in her hand. She was dressed in an elegant *kimono* but her hair was uncombed and she was weeping and sobbing as she walked. The kind fisherman forgot all his fear when he saw her and gently asked her what the matter was. The girl did not answer and continued to

sob with the tears streaming down her face. "Oh, please don't cry like that," said the fisherman. "Tell me what the matter is and I'll help you."

She still did not speak nor did she stop crying.

"Come, come," said the fisherman. "Don't be afraid of me. Dry your tears and tell me where you live and I'll take you home safely."

She still made no answer, but lifted the sleeve of her kimono to wipe her tears and her face. As the fisherman watched with horror, she wiped off her whole face.

The poor man did not know what to think or say, and ran away from there as though twenty devils were after him.

As he ran through the wood with a thumping heart and drumming ears, he spied a water garden. A monk was sitting still beside a pool of white and violet lilies glimmering in the starlight. The peaceful scene calmed him somewhat and he thought he would stop there for a while. So he went into the garden and sat down quietly next to the monk catching his breath.

After a while the monk said, "What's the matter? You seem disturbed. Can I help you in any way?"

"Well," said the fisherman slowly, still a little breathless from fear and his run. "I can't believe what happened. It was so strange. I saw a weeping woman on the way and when



I asked her to wipe her tears, she lifted the sleeve of her kimono and wiped off her whole face!" And the fisherman screwed up his face in horror at just the thought of what he had seen.

The monk consoled him saying, "It couldn't have been so bad. Did she do it like this?" And he lifted the sleeve of *his* kimono and wiped off his face!

The poor fisherman jumped up and backed off in terror. Then he turned and ran as though fifty devils were after him this time. He ran and ran till he thought his chest would burst. Just when he felt he could not take another step, he saw a little hut with a light in it. As he stood there huffing and puffing, an old woman came out of the door of the hut. She saw the poor man who looked as though he had been



dragged through a thorny bush and took pity on him. She invited him into her hut and gave him a soothing cup of hot tea. Then as she picked up a towel, she asked him what had frightened him so much.

When the fisherman told her, she

said: “Oh, like this?” and wiped off her face with the towel. This was too much for the fisherman to bear and he fell down in a faint.

The next he knew it was daytime and his friends were poking him awake. “Why are you lying in this swamp? Did you have too much to drink?” they asked.

The fisherman looked around him and indeed he was lying in the swamp near his home and there was no sign of the hut or the old woman

“But, but!” stammered the fisherman. “There was a hut here. I ran from the water garden and all those people wiped off their faces and then I fainted.”

Of course, what he told them made no sense to his friends who had to ask him a number of questions before they could piece together the story of the night. Then they looked for all the people and places that the fisherman said he had seen. But they could not spot any of them. “You must have drunk too much,” they insisted.

The fisherman opened his mouth to protest that it was nothing of the kind, when at a distance he saw a fox looking at him with a smug smile. He closed his mouth with a snap and went very quiet. He would not talk about his strange adventure after that, but his friends noticed he did not scoff at ghosts again or claim he did not believe in them.

Chandamama



# India in the 20th century

## 3. WAR AND PEACE WITH NEIGHBOURS (1951-1976)

Independent India's first ministry gave great importance to economic recovery from the after-effects of the World War and the repercussions of the partition of the country. In July 1951, the Planning Commission announced the launching of the First 5-year Plan. The Plan aimed at raising the national income, improving the standard of living, increasing production of food and raw materials, and expanding employment opportunities. Top priority was accorded to agriculture. The Planning Commission was headed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as Chairman and Prof. P.C. Mahalanobis as Vice-Chairman.

Though India and Pakistan had decided to end the war in Kashmir, the erstwhile princely state was proving troublesome. The National Conference demanded a separate constitution. Britain and the U.S.A. suggested merger of the state with India under the auspices of the United Nations. India thought this went against the U.N. Charter, and

insisted that Pakistan, as the aggressor, must first withdraw its army from the occupied territory. The Maharaja of Kashmir announced elections. India agreed to the formation of an assembly with 75 seats. All 75 candidates put up by the National Conference were elected unopposed. At its first meeting on October 31, 1951, the Assembly formally ratified the state's merger with India.

The first General Elections kept the nation busy for nearly six months. The process was started in October 1951 and completed in February 1952. Elections were held for a total of 489 seats in the Lok Sabha and 3,823 seats in the Legislative Assemblies of 22 states. Nearly 75 parties fielded about 17,000 candidates. More than 6,000 candidates stood as independents. The Congress won in 363 seats. The Communist Party, along with some allied parties, secured 41 seats and became the main Opposition. Jawaharlal Nehru was chosen Prime Minister.



# States on the basis of languages

On May 6, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected President of India and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Vice-President. The Parliament met on May 12. G.V. Mavlankar was chosen the first Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Earlier, on March 27, a 216-member Rajya Sabha was constituted. The Congress formed ministries in 18 provinces.



Dr. Rajendra Prasad

The year 1952 saw the emergence of a new political party. The Socialist Party, led by Jayaprakash Narayan, at its meeting in Pachmarhi in May, favoured Gandhism for Indian politics. This brought the party closer to the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party. In September, the two parties merged to form the Praja Socialist Party. Acharya J.B. Kripalani was elected Chairman. Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deo, Ram Manohar Lohia, and Asoka Mehta were the founder leaders.

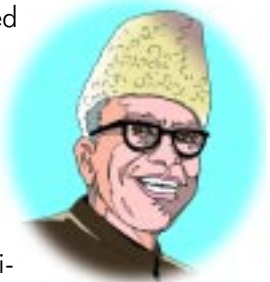


Jayaprakash Narayan

The first ever demand for a province on the basis of the language spoken by a majority of people was heard when Potti Sreeramulu began a fast for the

formation of a separate Andhra state for the Telugu-speaking people. Soon after his death in December, the Government separated 11 districts from the Madras Province and formed the Andhra state on October 1, 1953, with Kurnool as the capital. During the reorganisation of states in 1956, nine districts of Hyderabad were added to form Andhra Pradesh, with Hyderabad as the capital.

The Kashmir politics took a new turn in 1953. At the May meet of the National Conference, seven out of eight leaders opposed the policies of 'Prime Minister' Sheikh Abdullah, who was also accused of carrying on secret negotiations with Pakistan. The Sadr-i-Riyazat (Governor) dismissed him and made Bakshi Ghulam Muhammed the Prime Minister. The Sheikh was arrested.



Sheikh Abdullah

A milestone in India-China relations was reached when the two countries entered into an agreement recognising each other's territorial integrity, avoiding any military conflict, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, promoting equality and mutual cooperation, and maintaining peaceful co-existence. Later, these came to be known as Panch Sheel (Five Principles). Jawaharlal Nehru and



his Chinese counterpart, Chou En-lai, signed the agreement on June 28, 1954. In October, Nehru visited China.

A new state came into being on November 4, 1954 when France surrendered its possessions—Pondicherry, Mahe, Karaikal, and Yanam—which were merged to form the Centrally-administered Union Territory of Pondicherry. The formal handing over, however, took place only two years later when India and France signed a pact on May 28, 1956.



- ❖ President Babu Rajendra Prasad opened the newly built temple in Somnath, on May 11, 1951.
- ❖ The first Asian Games was inaugurated on March 4, 1951 in New Delhi. Nearly 490 athletes from 11 countries participated in the Games. Japan led the medals tally; India came second.
- ❖ The first census in free India in 1951 revealed the existence of 720 languages in use.

## Elsewhere in the world ...

- Man's conquest of space began with the launching of an artificial satellite. On October 4, 1957, Russia-made Sputnik-1 went into orbit beyond the earth's atmosphere. On November 3, Sputnik-2 carried a canine passenger—Laika. The USA fired a Vanguard rocket which exploded in the atmosphere. Undaunted by the initial failure, the USA sent into orbit Explorer-1 in December that year.

- ◆ The popular comic character Dennis the Menace first appeared in U.S. newspapers in December 1951.
- ◆ An Oxford University student, Roger Bannister, ran a mile in under 4 minutes (3:59.4) for the first time on May 6, 1954.
- ◆ Disneyland was thrown open to public in Anaheim, USA, on July 18, 1955.
- ◆ The first issue of the *Guinness Book of World Records* was released in London on August 27, 1955.

# Socialist pattern of society

The 60th session of the Indian National Congress in Avadi, a suburb of Madras, in January 1955 declared its aim of establishing a socialist pattern of society. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in the course of his election tour in Andhra in February, stated that the Government would establish socialism throughout the country.

India took another step in forging diplomatic relations when the country signed a pact with the second major world power, the Soviet Union. Accepting an invitation from that country, the Prime Minister paid an official visit in June 1955. The visit lasted more than a fortnight. In a joint declaration made on June 22, the two countries agreed to follow the Five Principles, and to strengthen the bonds between the two countries in the fields of economy, culture, and scientific development. The agreement was further cemented when President Bulganin and Prime Minister Khrushchev paid a return visit in November.

The States Reorganisation Commission, constituted in 1953, presented its report on September 30, 1955. It recommended formation of 16 states on the basis of the languages spoken by a majority of the people.

The states thus re-constituted on November 1, 1956 were Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bombay, Punjab, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh,

Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan, Madras, Mysore, and Kerala, and the Union Territories of Delhi, Andaman-Nicobar, Laccadives, Tripura, and Manipur.

The first ever elected Communist government in the world was formed in Kerala in 1957. The Communist Party won 60 seats out of 126. Five independent candidates supported by the Communists were also elected. The Congress got only 43 seats. E.M.S. Nambudripad became the Chief Minister.



E.M.S.  
Nambudripad

The Panchayati Raj system of village administration, the corner-stone of democracy, was introduced in 1957. Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan were the first states to introduce the Panchayati Raj system.

The Kashmir problem continued to simmer. Early in 1958, Sheikh Abdullah was released from prison. He took over the leadership of the Plebiscite Front and demanded revocation of Kashmir's merger with India, as the plebiscite held earlier had rejected the merger. The Sheikh was arrested once again on a charge of treason.

Before a solution could be found to the Kashmir problem, which was

heightened by Pakistan's incursions into Indian territory, India had to face incursion in another part. This time it was China with whom India had all along maintained friendly relations. The provocation was the flight of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, from Tibet, to escape a possible arrest and imprisonment.

- For the first time, India's tri-colour fluttered from the world's tallest peak when Mount Everest was conquered by the New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay on May 29, 1953. They hoisted the flags of India, Britain, Nepal, and the United Nations.
- India instituted National Awards like Bharat Ratna, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri in June 1954. The first Bharat Ratna awardees were C. Rajagopalachari, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, and C.V. Raman.



- Satyajit Ray's movie "Pathar Panchali" was premiered in New York in 1955. It was immediately hailed as a milestone in Indian film-making.

## Elsewhere in the world ...

- The USA took a major step in space travel when it launched a satellite and successfully retrieved it after it had orbited the earth, in May 1959. The satellite carried two monkeys, who went up 360 miles and travelled 1,700 miles.
- The Soviet satellite Lunik-2 landed on the moon on September 4, 1959, after orbiting for 35 hours, during which it sent information regarding radiation and the magnetic fields in the moon's atmosphere.

- ◆ The video game was invented by William Higginbotham of New York in 1958. It was a table tennis game and was called "Pong". It took another 14 years for its commercial production.
- ◆ The Jules Rimet trophy to be awarded to the winners in the World Cup Football was stolen from the Westminster Central Hall where it had been kept on display. The sensational theft took place on March 20, 1966. It was found abandoned in a south London park a week later by a pet dog.



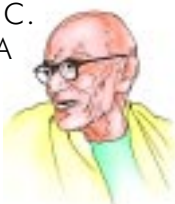
# Portuguese possessions liberated

The Dalai Lama left Tibet on March 17, 1959 and reached India a fortnight later. He sought asylum for himself and his followers. India received them and provided facilities for their stay in Uttar Pradesh. China took exception to this humanitarian act and accused India of interfering in the internal affairs of that country. In September, China released a map showing 132,000 sq. km area, stretching from Ladakh to Assam, as part of that country. India protested and decided to carry on negotiations.



Dalai Lama

Yet another political party was launched by the senior Congress leader, C. Rajagopalachari. A meeting of the All India Agriculturists Association in Madras in June 1959 opposed the Nehru government's policies, like land reforms and cooperative farming, and announced the formation of the Swatantra Party consisting of many Right wing members of the Congress. Its preparatory convention in October was attended by nearly 750 delegates from



C. Raja-  
gopalachari

11 states. The party received the support of landlords and the rulers of the princely states.

There were demonstrations in Bombay demanding separate states for people speaking Marathi and Gujarati. On March 18, 1960, the Bombay Reorganisation Bill was passed unanimously in the Bombay Assembly. On May 1, the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat were officially formed, with Bombay and Ahmedabad as the respective capitals.

In the wake of continued negotiations between India and China, Prime Minister Chou En-lai visited India a second time in April 1960. The ruling Congress as well as the Opposition parties did not approve of any agreement which did not insist on China returning the territories occupied by it. The talks between the Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon and the Chinese Foreign Minister did not bear fruit because of the general opposition from the various parties. China refused to part with the Aksai Chin area under its occupation.

December 18, 1961 was a Red Letter Day for India. The Indian Army, after a 24-hour military operation, liberated the Portuguese possessions of Goa, Daman, and Diu. The three areas were merged to form the Union Territory of Goa. Prime Minister Nehru defended the action saying all vestiges of colonialism had to be removed.

The third General Elections in the country in February 1962 saw the Congress retaining power in the Centre and in most of the States. The party won 361 seats in the Lok Sabha. With their 29 seats, the Communist Party of India became the main Opposition. In the State Assemblies, the Congress secured 1,759 out of 2,842 seats. The Communist Party won in 153 seats, Swatantra 166, and the Jan Sangh in 116 seats. On April 10, Jawaharlal Nehru became the Prime Minister once again.

- India's first nuclear research reactor Apsara was inaugurated on January 20, 1957.



- India introduced the decimal system on April 1, 1957. The smallest unit of currency was one naya paisa.
- It was decided to celebrate November 14—Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday—every year as Children's Day in India.
- Tara Cherian became the first woman Mayor in India (in Madras) in November 1957.

## Elsewhere in the world ...

- The first woman Prime Minister in the world, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, took office on June 21, 1960.
- Man's journey to space became a reality in 1961 when cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin travelling on the Russian satellite Vostok-1 went up 190 miles in 1 hour 48 minutes, before returning to earth on April 12. Within one month, on May 5, the USA sent the first astronaut Alan Shepard on spaceship Freedom-7. In July, astronaut Virgin Graham went into space, and in August, cosmonaut Herman Titov spent a full 24 hours in space.

- ◆ A landmark in medical history was reached on December 3, 1967 when a heart transplant was successfully carried out in a hospital in Cape Town, in South Africa, by Dr. Christian Barnard, assisted by a team of 30 doctors and nurses. The donor lady had died in a car accident, but with no injury to her heart. The donee lived with a new heart for 18 days before he died of pneumonia.

# Nehru era comes to an end

India was dragged to a full-scale war with China in 1962. After the annexation of Tibet in 1959, China had moved nearer to the Indian borders and started further incursions. In May-June 1962, China entered the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan forged friendship with China by ceding a part of Gilgit in May that year. India protested. China, however, contended that there was no agreement on the borders with India. This contradicted Prime Minister Chou En-lai's 1956 statement recognising Kashmir's merger with India.

On October 20, the Chinese army entered the North-Eastern Frontier Agency. Nearly 30,000 soldiers crossed Aksai Chin and moved towards Assam. India was caught unawares. Because of the extreme cold, the Indian army could not repulse the incursion. India declared a state of emergency and Jawaharlal Nehru took over Defence from V.K. Krishna Menon, who resigned from the Cabinet. The U.S.A., Britain, Canada, West Germany, and Australia extended help with armament. India was thus able to halt further encroachments. On November 21, China announced a unilateral ceasefire. Non-aligned countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Ghana, and the United Arab Republic met in Colombo. While India accepted

their proposals to end the war, China rejected them. When fighting ended, some 36,000 sq. km area in Ladakh and 5,200 sq. km in NEFA remained with China.

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, K. Kamaraj, who was a senior Congress leader, put forth the view that all those who had



K. Kamaraj

been holding official posts continuously for 10 years should resign and take up party work. The 'Kamaraj Plan' was unveiled on August 10, 1963. He set an example by resigning from his post. Six ministers in the Union Cabinet, including Morarji Desai and Jagjivan Ram, resigned their posts. The Chief Ministers of five states also resigned.

The Nehru era, which had made an indelible mark in Indian politics, came to an end on May 27, 1964. The Prime Minister had taken ill in January when he was attending the Bhubaneswar session of the Congress. He did not get back to normal despite treatment. However, he continued to work tirelessly. He had a brief holiday



in Dehra Dun, from where he returned on May 26. His condition suddenly took a turn for the worst next morning, and his end came around 2 p.m. The nation had honoured him with Bharat Ratna in 1955. He had a special affection for children to whom he was 'Chacha' Nehru.

- Mihir Sen of Calcutta swam the English Channel in 14 hrs 45 minutes on September 27, 1958. He became the first Indian and Asian to swim the Channel, from Dover to Calais in France (34 km).
- India introduced the metric system for weights and measures on October 1, 1958.
- Vinoba Bhave became the first Indian to receive the Magsaysay Award of the Philippines in December 1958.
- On September 29, 1959 India's Arati Saha became the first Asian woman to cross the English Channel.
- Arjuna Awards for excellence in sports and games were instituted in 1961.
- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan took over as the 2nd President of India on May 13, 1962. It was decided to observe his birthday on September 5 every year as Teachers Day.
- The Birla planetarium—Asia's first and second biggest in the world—was opened in Calcutta on September 29, 1962.

## Elsewhere in the world ...

- On February 3, 1966, the Soviet Luna-9 made a soft landing on the moon. This paved the way for man to land on the moon. The satellite transmitted pictures of the lunar surface to earth.

◆ The 'mouse' device for computer operation was invented by Douglas Gilbert in 1968.

◆ Economics was added to Medicine, Physics, Chemistry, Literature and Peace for award of Nobel Prize.

◆ The USA sent the Skylab space station on May 14, 1973 with three astronauts on board. They spent 84 days in space.

◆ A super-computer was made by Seymour Cray in 1976. Called Cray-1, it was capable of doing 2 crore 40 lakh calculations in one second.

◆ On July 20, 1976, the US spacecraft Viking 1 landed on planet Mars, and transmitted pictures to earth.

## Second war with Pakistan

The Congress Parliamentary Party met on June 2 and elected Lal Bahadur Shastri as free India's second Prime Minister. He took office on June 9.



Lal Bahadur Shastri

The Communist Party of India officially split on April 11, 1964. Following the India-China War in 1962, the differences among the leaders had come to the fore, dividing them into the pro-Russia group and those who toed the Chinese line. In August, seven members formed a separate block in the Lok Sabha, and the CPI lost its position as the main Opposition.

Soon after he was released from prison in April 1964, the Kashmir leader Sheikh Abdullah revived the Plebiscite Front and reiterated the people's right to decision-making. He went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in March-April 1965, when he also met President Nasser of Egypt and the Chinese Premier Chou En-lai, both of whom backed his stand for Kashmir's independence. India revoked his passport. In April, Jammu and Kashmir was brought under the Indian

Constitution. The nomenclature of Sadr-i-Riyazat was changed to Governor and Wazir-e-Azam (Prime Minister) to Chief Minister. On his return from pilgrimage, the Sheikh was taken into custody.

The year 1965 saw India and Pakistan going to war for a second time. In April, Pakistan ceded more than 2,000 sq. miles of Indian territory to China. The Pakistan army entered the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. In June, the Pak soldiers trespassed more than 8 miles into the Indian territory, and attacked army posts. In August, it came to the notice of India that nearly 7,000 terrorists had mingled with the local people in Kashmir. The Pak army also started firing at Indian targets.

On September 1, India's Air Force went into action and created havoc among the enemy lines. On September 4, a war front was opened in the Punjab area, and a division broke the enemy lines and headed towards Lahore. On September 6, President Ayub Khan officially declared war against India. The Indian army scored some major victories, by destroying nearly 100 Patton tanks.

On September 11, the U.N. Secretary-General U Thant arrived in India to bring about an end to the war. Both countries rejected a proposal for immediate ceasefire.

However, on the persistent appeal by the U.N. Security Council, fighting was stopped on September 23. Pakistan surrendered 710 sq. miles of territory, while India had to give up 210 sq. miles.



- The peacock was declared the National bird on January 31, 1963.
- Nagaland became a full-fledged state on December 1, 1963.



- The first vintage car rally was held in Calcutta on March 22, 1964. Fifty vehicles took part.
- The first ever commemorative coins were minted and released with the figure of Jawaharlal Nehru, in December 1964.

## Elsewhere in the world ...

- July 21, 1969 was a red-letter day in the history of humanity. The U.S.A. landed man on the moon. It was a dream come true. Neil Armstrong was the first man to put his foot on the moon. Eighteen minutes later, astronaut Edwin Aldrin also stepped on the moon. Together they planted the flag of the U.S.A. They spent nearly two hours on the moon, collecting rocks and dust from the surface and taking photographs. All the while, astronaut Michael Collins remained in the mothership Columbia. The Lunar module named Eagle then returned to the mothership with the two others and the spacecraft named Apollo-11 returned to earth on July 24. It was, as Armstrong said : "A small step for man, but a giant leap for mankind."
- On March 25, 1969, Pakistan came under military rule when General Yahya Khan captured power. President Ayub Khan resigned.



# India's woman Prime Minister

After the cessation of hostilities, India and Pakistan entered into a Pact of Friendship brokered by the Soviet Union. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and President Ayub Khan met at Tashkent in Uzbekistan and carried on discussions for seven days, from January 4, 1966. On January 10, they signed an agreement promising mutual friendship and peace. It was decided that both armies would withdraw to the pre-August 5 positions, exchange prisoners of war, re-establish diplomatic relations, hold top-level discussions to settle bilateral issues, and not interfere in the internal affairs of the other country.

By a quirk of fate, Lal Bahadur Shastri suffered a massive heart attack in the night and passed away early morning.

Gulzarilal Nanda, who served as acting Prime Minister following the demise of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964, once again assumed that position.

The Congress Party, at the instance of President K. Kamaraj, chose Indira Gandhi as the third Prime Minister. She took the oath of office on January 23, 1966.

On November 1, two separate states carved out of Punjab—Punjab and Haryana—came into being, with Chandigarh as the common capital.

The fourth General Elections were

conducted in February 1967. The Congress won in 283 seats; the Swatantra Party secured 44 seats, Jan Sangh 35, CPI 23, CPM 19, PSP 13, other parties 45, and independents 35 seats. The Congress lost its majority in the assemblies in Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, W. Bengal, U.P., Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, besides Delhi. On March 12, Indira Gandhi was re-elected Prime Minister.



Indira  
Gandhi

Some of the former Congressmen, who had either resigned or been expelled from the party, formed the Bharatiya Kranti Dal in May 1967. The leaders included Dr. P.C. Ghosh, V.K. Krishna Menon, and J.B. Kripalani. The objects of the Dal were to fight the power monopoly, corruption, and nepotism in the Congress and re-establish values in politics.

Dr. Zakir Husain became the third President of India on May 13, 1967.

At almost the same time, the Naxalites of W. Bengal formed a full-fledged organisation. Sixty villages in the Naxalbari area of Darjeeling district demanded agrarian reforms and began an armed agitation, which soon



Dr. Zakir  
Husain

acquired a political colour. The Naxalites now extended their activities to towns and cities. The agitation had echoes in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh.

- ❖ Pope Paul VI arrived in Bombay in 1964. He was the first Pope to visit India.



G. Sankara Kurup

- ❖ The Malayalam poet G. Sankara Kurup became the first recipient of the Jnanpith Award in 1965.
- ❖ India's ace swimmer Mihir Sen created a world record by swimming across five straits and canals, between April and October 1966. He was the first man to cross the entire stretch of the 96 km Panama Canal in 34 hours 15 minutes.

## Elsewhere in the world ...

- General Yahya Khan ordered general elections in Pakistan. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by the former Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman secured majority in West Pakistan and East Pakistan respectively. As the Awami League was demanding independence for East Pakistan, there was friction and conflict between the two regions divided by thousands of miles.
- The Soviet Soyuz-9 spacecraft, carrying nine cosmonauts spent 17 days in space in June 1970.
- On November 14, 1971, Mariner-9 launched by NASA orbited Mars for the first time. It observed 85 per cent of the planet's surface and transmitted photographs to earth. A fortnight later, the Soviet Mars-2 reached the Martian atmosphere but it was shattered due to the dust raised on the planet's surface. However, Mars-3 made a successful soft landing on the planet on December 2. The satellite sent signals for 20 seconds, before it was abandoned.

# India goes to help Bangladesh

The rumblings in the Congress threatened an immediate split in the party, especially with the resignation on July 16, 1969 of the Deputy Prime Minister Morarji Desai, when he was divested of the Finance portfolio, which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi herself took over.

Following the demise of President Dr. Zakir Husain in office on May 3, 1969, Vice-President V.V. Giri was elected after a keen contest against the official Congress candidate N. Sanjiva Reddy. G.S. Pathak defeated his rival J. Sivashanmugham Pillai to become the Vice-President.



V.V. Giri

The differences in the party became more prominent at the time of election for the post of the President, resulting in a split, with the supporters of Indira Gandhi calling themselves Congress (R). The other group, called Congress (O), was led by the Congress President S. Nijalingappa.

India went for elections for the fifth Lok Sabha in March 1971. The Congress (R) secured 350 out of 518 seats. Indira Gandhi took office as Prime Minister again on March 18.

The country waged yet another war with Pakistan in December 1971. The conflict between West and East Pakistan took a turn for the worse. Following repressive measures in East Pakistan,

which was clamouring for independence, there was an influx of refugees to West Bengal upsetting the economy of that state in particular and India in general. There was an incursion by Pakistani planes over W. Bengal. Indian Air Force planes shot down three Pak planes on November 23. The next day, the Indian Army was ordered to cross over to East Pakistan and go to the help of the Mukti Bahini in liberating East Pakistan. On December 3, Pak planes made a lightning strike on nine Air Force installations in India. India immediately declared war against Pakistan, and the Parliament approved imposition of Emergency.

On December 6, India recognised Bangladesh as an independent nation. On December 8, the Pak army in Bangladesh was asked to surrender, following the fall of several districts. Meanwhile, the Indian army registered successes in the Western front. The Pak army was once again asked to surrender, on December 12. Three days later, General A.K. Niazi announced ceasefire and General J.S. Aurora took the Pak army's unconditional surrender in Dacca. On December 17 India declared a unilateral ceasefire, which was accepted by President Yahya Khan.

Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh became full-fledged states on January 20, 1972. The next day saw the birth of the states of Manipur and Tripura and the Union Territory of Mizoram.

Elections to 16 State assemblies and



two Union Territories were conducted in March 1972. Congress (R) secured a majority in 14 States and the Union Territory of Delhi. In Goa, the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party captured power, while in Meghalaya, the All-Party Hill Leaders Association had the largest number of seats. In Manipur, no party had any majority.

On July 3, 1972, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan signed what came to be called the Simla Agreement. The surrender of the Pak Army in Bangladesh had prompted Bhutto to oppose the military rule in Pakistan. He became the Prime Minister. Though the Simla summit was the offshoot of the formation of Bangladesh, the discussions mainly centred round the Kashmir problem.

On April 5, 1973, the ruler of the neighbouring country of Sikkim appealed for India's help in maintaining law and order. The next day, a unit of the Indian army and a battalion of the Central Reserve Police entered Sikkim. The Maharaja and the Indian Government agreed to accept the demand of political parties for establishment of a democratic set up.

The Lok Sabha passed the 35th Amendment bill on September 24, 1974, for the merger of Sikkim into the Indian Union. Sikkim became the 22nd full-fledged state on April 26, 1975.



Bhutto

## Some of India's milestones

- ❖ The superfast (130 km per hour) train service called Rajdhani was introduced on the Delhi-Howrah route on March 1, 1969.
- ❖ India's Fourth 5-year Plan was launched in December 1969.
- ❖ The birth centenary of movie-maker Dada Saheb Phalke was commemorated with the institution of the Dada Saheb Phalke Award for life-time service to cinema. The first recipient was Devika Rani Roerich.
- ❖ The Gir forest in Gujarat was declared a sanctuary for Asiatic lions, in December 1969.
- ❖ The election of V.V. Giri as President was contested in the Supreme Court, which confirmed his election. For the first time, the President of India appeared before the Court in person on April 20 and 21, 1970.
- ❖ The Vivekananda Memorial in Kanyakumari was inaugurated by President Giri on September 2, 1970.
- ❖ Nagendra Singh, a judge of the International Court of Justice, became the first Indian President of the Court, in 1970.

## India joins the Nuclear Club

India took a bold decision to give a thrust to its nuclear programme. On May 18, 1974, it conducted an underground test in Pokhran, in the deserts of Rajasthan. The implosion 107m below the earth was carried out at 8.15 a.m. India thus broke the monopoly of world powers and joined the Nuclear Club. However, it asserted that its nuclear tests would all be for peaceful purposes.

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed took over as the fifth President of India on August 24. On August 27, B.D. Jatti became the Vice-President.

In Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah once again became Chief Minister on February 25, 1975. The agreement he entered into with the Centre was approved by the state legislature, which now could take decisions on all matters other than the sovereignty of the Indian Union. In June, the Sheikh disbanded the Plebiscite Front and joined the National Conference.

Emergency had earlier been imposed in the country in 1962 and 1965 when India went to war with China and Pakistan. Emergency was imposed for a third time in June 1975. It all started with the Allahabad High Court judgement of June 12 invalidating the 1971 election of Indira Gandhi, and restricting her from holding any elected post for six years. On June 13, most of the Opposition parties staged a

demonstration in front of Rashtrapati Bhavan demanding the Prime Minister's resignation. On June 24, the Supreme Court stayed the verdict of the Allahabad High Court. On June 25, the Opposition parties, except the CPI, under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, decided to launch a nationwide agitation against the Indira Gandhi government. That night, President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed promulgated Emergency, stating that there was internal threat to the country's sovereignty. Leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, A.B. Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, Charan Singh, and Asoka

Mehta were arrested. The RSS, Anand Marg, and several other organisations were banned. Press Censorship was imposed. On November 7, the Supreme Court held Indira Gandhi's election from Rae Bareilly as valid. Emergency was lifted

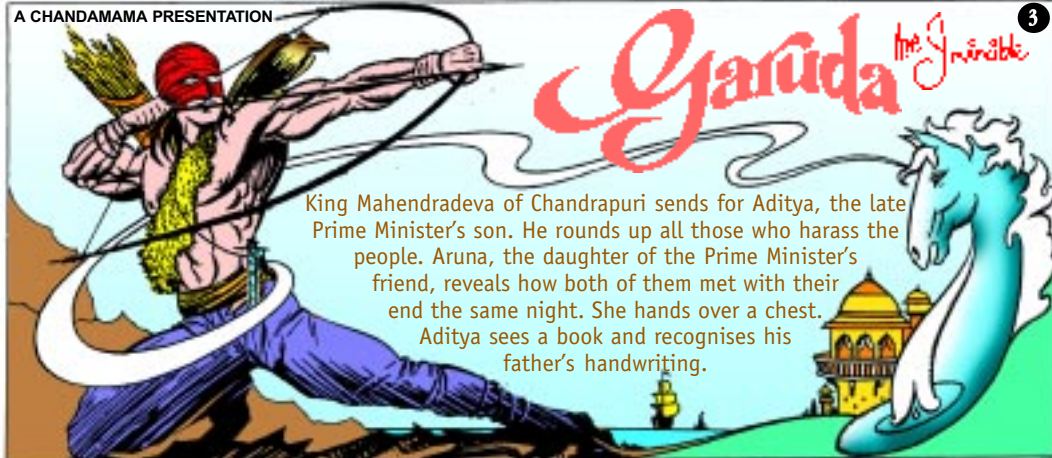
only in 1977 just before the next General Elections.

A new political front had come into being in the Parliament in 1976, when four parties decided to merge to form the Janata Party. The parties were the Congress (O), Jan Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal, and the Socialist Party. In the 1977 elections, the Janata Party wrested power from the Congress, marking a watershed in Indian politics.



Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed

***(Next month : World's largest democracy in action)***



King Mahendradeva of Chandrapuri sends for Aditya, the late Prime Minister's son. He rounds up all those who harass the people. Aruna, the daughter of the Prime Minister's friend, reveals how both of them met with their end the same night. She hands over a chest.

Aditya sees a book and recognises his father's handwriting.



*Vinata told her son Garuda how she lost a bet with Kadru, who insisted on her and Garuda serving her and her sons, Nagas. Garuda appealed to Kadru to release him and his mother from bondage.*



If you go and bring me Amrit from Devaloka, you and your mother need no longer serve us.







*Garuda approached the pot of nectar guarded by two serpents. All around the pot burnt a fire, watched by many Devas. Garuda fought with them, put out the fire, and killed the serpents. He picked up the pot. As he was flying...*

*...Indra, who was alerted, aimed his Vajrayudha at Garuda. Only one feather got snipped. Indra realised that Garuda was invincible.*

Amrit is meant only for the Devas. Don't give it to anybody else.









## 10. An end to Durvasa's jealousy

Shrimati's *swayamvara* was a grand affair. The fame of her beauty had spread far and wide, and many princes came to the *swayamvara* with the hope of winning her hand. Narada, too, was there with the face of a monkey, a form that Vishnu had given him. There were sniggers and snickers when everyone saw him. Narada was mortified when he realised what had happened.

Shrimati, however, had already chosen Vishnu as her lord. She held the *varamala*, a flower garland, in her hands and, closing her eyes, thought of only Vishnu. Immediately Vishnu appeared before her and Shrimati placed the garland around his neck. Vishnu took Shrimati away to Vaikunta.

Narada was furious at the thought of Shrimati choosing someone else, and not rishi Parvat or him. He went straight to King Ambarish and gave vent to their anger. Narada was about to curse Ambarish when Vishnu's *Sudarshan Chakra* appeared spinning at great speed. Narada realised that it was aimed at him and he ran away from there. But there was no escaping the Chakra, which chased Narada and Parvat through the three worlds. Finally, huffing and puffing, they reached Vaikunta before the Chakra caught up with them.

At Vaikunta, a most unwelcome sight met Narada's eyes. Shrimati was seated next to Vishnu. Once again he shook with terrible fury. He looked at



Vishnu with loathing and cursed him. “You won Shrimati by cheating. You’ll lose her because she will be abducted and carried away from you. You humiliated me by giving me the form of a monkey. You’ll be forced to seek the help of the very same creatures to find your abducted wife.”



Vishnu smiled as he listened to Narada’s curse. He lifted his hand and removed the veil of *maya* from the eyes of the two sages. Shrimati once again became Lakshmi and took her place next to Vishnu.

Narada at once came to his senses. He felt ashamed of what he had done

while blinded by *maya* and was truly repentant. He fell at Vishnu’s feet and sobbed out his remorse and regret. Vishnu then consoled him: “You’re someone who knows all that happens in the three worlds. Why then are you so upset? You know all this had to happen. I wanted you to curse me and that is why it has happened. I have to be born on the Earth as Rama for the well-being of the people.”

Then Vishnu ordained that the Sudarshan Chakra would now protect Ambarish.

Narada was somewhat consoled and soon set off on his travels through the universe. Once, singing the name of *Narayana*, he was on his way back from a visit to Ambarish when he passed by Sage Durvasa’s hermitage. He found the sage just coming out of his *ashram*.

“You seem to have had a sumptuous meal, O sage! You look very pleased,” taunted Durvasa.

Narada greeted Durvasa and said: “I haven’t eaten yet and I’m quite hungry. But I’m pleased because I’ve just met the great Vishnu devotee, King Ambarish. It warms my heart to see his devotion.”

Durvasa was a great rishi. He was very proud of his yogic powers. However, he would become very jealous

if he were to hear anyone else being praised. When Narada praised Ambarish, he went green with jealousy. He asked rather tartly: "Is Ambarish such a great devotee that your heart is filled with joy on just hearing his name?"

"Without doubt," Narada answered. "He commands Vishnu's special grace. If you meet him, you'll realise what I say is true. In fact he will feel honoured by a visit from you." Then Narada, having set Durvasa seething with envy, went his way chanting '*Narayana, Narayana*'.

Durvasa felt he could not rest till he had seen Ambarish and his devotion to Vishnu for himself. So he immediately set off for his palace.

When Durvasa arrived at the court, Ambarish was about to break his *ekadashi* fast. The king welcomed the sage with due respect and ceremony. He then invited him to share a meal with him. Sage Durvasa accepted the invitation. He then went for a ritual bath and took a long time over it.

Ambarish was now in a fix. The auspicious period for breaking his fast was fast coming to an end, and there was no sign of the sage! According to custom, if he did not break his fast within that period, the entire purpose of the fast would be lost. Yet he could

also not eat before his guest came back from his bath. So, after taking the advice of the pundits in the court, he broke his fast with a sip of water and then waited for the sage.

The sage, however, went into a towering rage. He accused Ambarish of insulting him.



He said: "You are ignoble, O king. You think you're the greatest follower of Vishnu, yet you lack even the basic manners. How dare you insult me like this? All beings, in all the three worlds, tremble at the power of my anger. Now no one can save you from my curse."



It is said all of Durvasa's yogic power was stored in his dreadlocks. Now he pulled loose a lock of his hair and breathed into it a powerful *mantra*. At once it started raining fire and the sky was filled with dense, dark smoke. From the smoke emerged a huge mountain like demon. His name was Kritya. Kritya pounced on King Ambarish to kill him. But before he could do so, Vishnu's Sudarshan Chakra appeared spinning rapidly. It created a shower of fire that fell on Kritya. In front of Durvasa's very eyes, Kritya was burnt to ashes.

King Ambarish did not get upset but fell at Durvasa's feet and begged for forgiveness. "I've not eaten as yet, O sage!" he cried. "I took the advice of the pundits and took only a sip of water to break my fast. I'm still waiting to serve you before I eat. Please forgive me if I've done anything wrong."

King Ambarish's soft behaviour and gentle words had no effect on Durvasa who was full of anger.

"Forgive? Durvasa does not know how to forgive. You've to reap the fruits of your sins. You'll soon know whether the power of *tapasya* or the strength of *bhakti* is greater." Thundering with pride and anger, Durvasa kicked Ambarish away from his feet.

After that the Sudarshan Chakra turned round and attacked Durvasa. Durvasa pulled out another lock and threw it at the divine Chakra. At once another huge mountain was formed to block the Chakra. But as soon as the Chakra touched the mountain, it broke into smithereens. Once again the Chakra rapidly spun towards Durvasa. He threw another lock at it and the sky was filled with black clouds that enveloped the Chakra. But almost at once the sharp, burning rays of the Chakra cut through the clouds. Soon all the clouds evaporated and the Chakra relentlessly continued to move towards Durvasa.

Now Durvasa really panicked. He did not know what to do. The heat



from the rays of the Chakra burnt away all his dreadlocks and with that, all the hard won power the sage had collected over years of austerities and *tapasya* also vanished.

Durvasa ran through the three worlds. At one point he ran past Narada who asked him where he was going in such hurry. The poor sage could not say anything and pointed at the Chakra chasing him. Finally, he reached the world of Brahma. He fell at Brahma's feet and begged: "Please save me! The Sudarshan Chakra is chasing me. Rescue me please!"

"O Sage, I'm helpless. I was born from the lotus that came out of Vishnu's navel. I have no power over his Chakra," Brahma replied.

From Vaikunta, Durvasa ran to Kailasa, the abode of Shiva. But Shiva, too, said he was helpless. "It's Vishnu's Chakra and only he can help you."

By now Durvasa's pride had melted away. He had lost all his powers and felt completely helpless and unprotected. When Brahma and Shiva both said they could not help him, he ran to Vishnu in despair.

On hearing his appeal, Vishnu, said: "I had sent the Sudarshan Chakra a long time ago to protect

my great devotee Ambarish. Now he alone can command the Chakra. You'd better go and ask him to call the Chakra off."

Durvasa felt very humble. He had gathered a great deal of courage to appeal to Vishnu. Now he realised that the basis of his pride and arrogance was indeed hollow. All of Durvasa's egoism was extinguished. When that happened, Durvasa had no trouble in going to Ambarish and asking for his help and forgiveness. At once, the Sudarshan Chakra disappeared.

**(To continue)**





## BORN THIS MONTH

Scene: Madras, 1933. A young man alights from a flight from Germany armed with a doctorate. His relatives had helped him go abroad for higher studies. Now, though back in India, he did not have enough money to travel to his home-town. He was in a fix. Suddenly an idea struck him. He went to the office of *The Hindu*, a prominent newspaper. "Will you pay me if I give you an article?" he asked. The editor agreed, and he dashed off a political article immediately. And the remuneration helped pay for his ticket.

This resourceful young man was Ram Manohar Lohia, who later came to be well known as a great socialist thinker, humanitarian, intellectual, and politician.

Lohia was born on March 23, 1910 in Akbarpur, a village in Uttar Pradesh. His political career started when he was barely ten years old. He organised *swadeshi* activities, like burning foreign-made clothes, wearing *khadi*, and engaging in civil disobedience. Lohia joined Gandhiji's *satyagraha* movement, too. But he was never a blind follower.

His student days at the Benares Hindu University saw him established as a brilliant scholar and a fiery orator. He became the President of the All India Students Congress in 1929.

Lohia joined the Indian National Congress in 1934. When some of the younger members formed a separate group in the Congress called the Congress Socialist Party, Lohia was appointed editor of its newspaper, *Congress Socialist*.

In 1942, when the Quit India movement gained momentum, Lohia got inspiring posters and pamphlets printed at an underground press. He also started a secret radio station called the 'Congress Radio' in Bombay,



**RAM MANOHAR LOHIA**

which stirred the people to join the movement. The British imprisoned and tortured him. Yet he remained undaunted.

Lohia made an impact in the international political arena, too. He helped found the First Asian Socialist Conference in 1952.

He founded the Praja Socialist Party in 1953 with other like-minded leaders. He crusaded for the promotion of Indian languages and envisaged a casteless and classless society.

He won a by-election in 1963 from the Farrukhabad constituency in Uttar Pradesh. He was vociferous in expressing his views with great conviction in the Parliament. He is one of India's greatest Parliamentarians ever.

Lohia involved the masses in many constructive programmes, like digging canals and constructing dams. He passed away on October 12, 1967. "I do not know a person more brave and more simple than him. He never propagated violence. Whatever he has done has increased his esteem and his honour." This tribute came from Gandhiji when Lohia was arrested in 1940 for his anti-government article in *Harijan*.

USE YOUR  
VACATION TO  
WIN A PRIZE

An invitation to children to contribute to the

## CHILDREN'S SPECIAL

(November 2001 issue)

**For young writers :-** Original stories between 300 and 500 words, with a catchy title, and/or puzzles, riddles, jokes. Entries may be in English, Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil or Malayalam. You may send up to three entries. If you have a friend to make drawings/paintings for your entry, send them, too. If they are good, your friend will be invited to Chennai (all expenses paid) to do the final drawing.

**For young artists :-** Upto three drawings/paintings based on a well-known incident in Indian mythology/history (to be explained in writing). Those sending entries which come up to our expectations will be invited to Chennai to illustrate the stories/items chosen for the Special Number.

**Closing date :** June 7, 2001

**Prizes :** Attractive prizes will be given to meritorious efforts.

**Photo :** Please attach a passport size photo along with your entry.

Name : ..... Age/Date of Birth : .....

Class : ..... School : .....

Home address : .....

.....

..... Pin Code : .....

Description of entries :-

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

I hereby certify that the entries mentioned above are the original, unaided work of my son/daughter. I hereby agree to *Chandamama* holding full copyright on the selected entry and using it in the print and electronic media and in any language.

*Signature of Participant*

*Signature of Parent*

[ Please fill the form on the reverse and return ]

I. Are you a paid subscriber of *Chandamama*? If so, state in which language you read the magazine :

.....

II. If you are not a paid subscriber, state the source from where you get a copy (put ✓ mark)

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III. How many persons read your copy?

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IV. State which features you like most (in the order of your preference) :-

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VI. Which type of drawings have attracted you? (Mention the issue date and the title of the story/topic/feature) :-

.....

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VII. In the last six issues, which cover drawing had attracted you most? (Mention language and issue date) :

.....

VIII. a) Profession/vocation of your

Father : .....

Mother : .....

b) Family income (monthly) (put ✓ mark)

Rs.5,000 : .....

Rs.5,001—10,000 : .....

More than Rs.10,000 : .....

IX Do you watch TV?

Doordarshan : .....

Satellite Channel : .....

X Is your TV B/W .....or

Colour.....?

XI How do you commute to school?

By school bus : .....

By city bus : .....

By own vehicle:

2 wheeler : .....

4 wheeler : .....

Who drops you at school?

Parents : .....

Driver : .....

XII Are you subscribing for any other children's magazine?.....

Name : .....

XIII Do you read a daily newspaper?

Name : .....

# FEAR OF TOMORROW

Bobby bounded up the stairs, burst into his room, and crashlanded on his bed. One yank, and the covers came up. Eyelashes closed into a deadlock, Bobby felt safe tucked into an absorbing darkness.

The horrors that had stalked him throughout the day seemed to have lost his trail now. The unfinished homework, the sum he could not solve on the board, the poem he could not recite, his Lego dream tower that had collapsed when his toddling sister had stumbled on it, and the last disaster that had come as a grand finale to end the show of the day — the breaking of the teapot that sat as a mother-hen roosting on the table — were all left far behind.

Bobby was walking down a road all alone. He could not make out where he was, for darkness is queer stuff — it imposes anonymity on everything. All he hoped for was, the road would not lead to tomorrow.

“I’ve a game for you, Bobby, that will postpone tomorrow,” a voice surprised him. Lost in his fears of sums and sentences that waited to trap him the next morning, Bobby had not noticed the man by the wayside.

“Who are you? And how did you



know that I do not want to reach tomorrow?” Bobby questioned in a huff.

“Well,” put the man, getting up, “do you need those answers, or does tomorrow bother you more?”

Now in full view, the man looked quite impressive. His skin was crinkled but he did not appear old. Bobby narrowed his eyes for a piercing look, but could not decide whether he knew this man or not. His face was definitely familiar. Wasn’t he the wise man that figured at the end of every fable to solve the problems that nobody else could solve? Bobby bent his head for some fast thinking. Then, looking up he said: “How can I trust you?”

“You certainly are already a hard-headed young fellow,” the man spoke up with dour emphasis. “I’m sure your



grandmother has told you many a story about me. Anyway, she couldn't have missed this one. One morning, I was deep in study of the *Nyayashastra*, when rapid footsteps crowded my doorway. Before I could even look up to see their faces, the leader told me that the king had summoned me to go immediately to the court. I rushed without delay.

"And there I found a blind man, and a man and woman wailing out their plights. According to the man and woman who, they claimed, were husband and wife, the case stood thus: The couple was coming to town on their donkey when they saw the blind man on the road. Taking pity, the husband asked his wife to get down and, in her place, offered the ride to the blind, turning a deaf ear to his wife's protestations. On reaching the town, the husband asked the blind man to get off, which he refused to do. Instead, he began accusing the husband of stealing a donkey from a blind man. As a crowd gathered and sympathy flowed heavily towards the blind man, the man and

his wife decided to let go off their donkey as they found the situation hopeless. However, when the man and his wife began walking away, the blind man struck again saying that, after stealing his donkey, the man was now stealing his wife!

Though shaken, the couple refused to bow down to the devilry of the blind man, and that was why they were in this court demanding justice. While the husband recounted, the blind man kept ranting at his fate and screaming that there was no justice for those unfortunate like him.

First, his donkey was stolen and then his wife, seeing her chance to have a full man rather than a handicapped person like him, had chosen her way out.

"The court was in a shambles — who should they believe? Everybody appeared to be saying the truth. I whispered into the king's ears: 'Your majesty, let all the three be locked up in different cells for the night. And we shall observe them, and the sentence shall be read out the next morning.' So, it was done. And our vigil turned fruitful.



"In the first cell, the blind man was quiet to start with. Then, a smile escaped his lips and with every passing instant, he seemed to be shaking with laughter at some private joke. As the night progressed, the blind man's mirth grew. He hopped with joy, singing a crude rhyme:

*At start of day I was a pauper  
without hope,  
By noon I owned a donkey to  
carry me to the pope;  
By nightfall I shall have a  
wife,  
So no more do I scrounge and  
grobe.*

"In his cell, the husband was a shrunken man beating his chest and tearing his hair. Why had he been such a softhearted fool? How could a levelheaded man like him be tricked so stupidly? Why hadn't he paid heed to the gentle wisdom of his wife? There was no end to his afflictions.

"From the cell where the woman had been locked could be heard only broken sobs. The truth was out."

"Oh, so that was how you found out the treachery of the blind man," Bobby spoke in awe at the end, as he had not dared to interrupt the narrative.

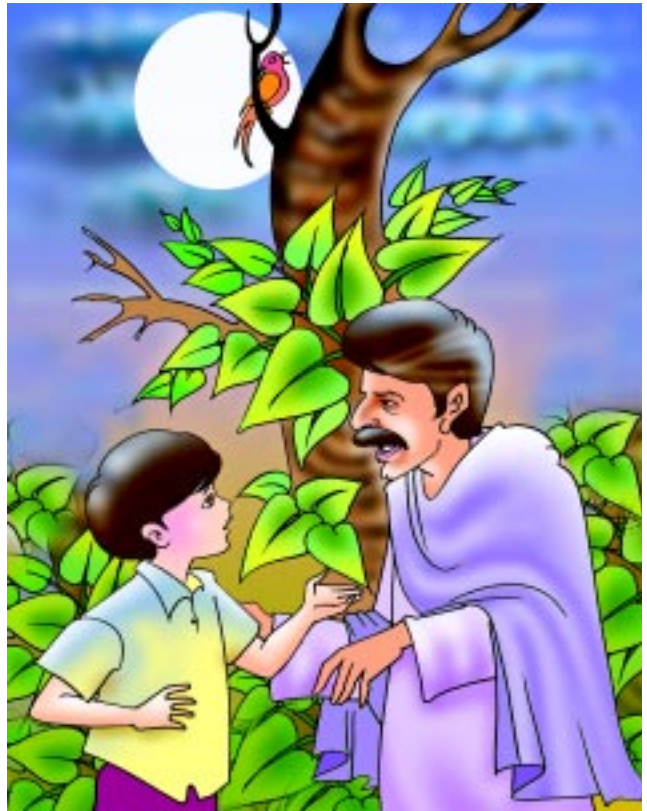
"Yes," replied the man emphatically. "So, now, are you convinced about me? Shall we begin

our little game?" the old man questioned.

"What is it called?" Bobby was enthusiastic now.

"Do you like riddles?"

"Right you are. You know, I won the First Prize in the State Junior Inter-



School Quiz Contest held last week."

"Did you win it alone? Wasn't there Abhay in your team, who managed to answer all the questions in the final buzzer round that really put you ahead of the others?"

"Oh! You know even that?" A wide-



eyed Bobby was really impressed.

The old man decided not to answer this. Instead, he continued: "I shall ask you a riddle, if you answer rightly, you move away from tomorrow. If you can't answer, well, you then take a step closer to tomorrow. Are you ready?"

Bobby nodded.

"So, here's your first riddle, an easy one to start with.

*There was a green house*

*Inside the green house was a white house*

*Inside the white house was a red house*

*Inside the red house were a lot of black babies.*

*What am I?"*

"That's truly an easy one," Bobby cried out. "Grandma has told me this from her book of ancient riddles that never get old. The answer is—a watermelon. Right?"

"Right you are," echoed the old man, smiling. So you move a step away from tomorrow. Here goes the next one:

*At night they come without being fetched,*

*And by day they are lost without being stolen."*

Bobby looked puzzled. "That's tough," he said, with a grave nod after having walked several paces.

"Do you give up, then?"

"Not so easily."

And so they walked on, the darkness and silence mingling to give a sense of wonder and deep communion between man and child. Straight-backed tall trees on both sides made Bobby feel that he was being presented with a guard of honour. Yet despite concentrating as pointedly as he could, Bobby could not find the answer. "I give up," he said, exhausted.

"All right, so you're one down. Shall I give the answer out?"

"Yes, what's it?" Bobby was impatient.

"Stars! So, you inch towards tomorrow. Never mind, here's the third riddle:

*The beginning of eternity,  
The end of time and space,  
The beginning of every end,  
At the end of every place."*

This time, too, Bobby knew he was beaten. But he did not want the old man to know it so fast. He locked his hands behind his back, buried his chin deep, squeezed his eyebrows in a fierce line, and pretended to be in thought. And, again man and child walked through the stretch ahead. Now the darkness was thinning and appeared to have a pale lining below. The stars were about to be lost and Bobby knew that he was fast approaching tomorrow.

"All right!, I give up again. My losing must be giving you a pleasure," Bobby said bitterly.

"Not at all," said the sage old man with a winning smile. "As you must have noticed, tomorrow is almost upon us. I better let out the answer fast so that you've a chance of retreating with a correct answer to the next riddle posed. Well the answer is — e."

"What?"

"Simple, the letter 'E'. Just go through the riddle once again and you'll understand. I don't think there'll be time for another riddle after this.

So, here's your last chance to escape tomorrow:

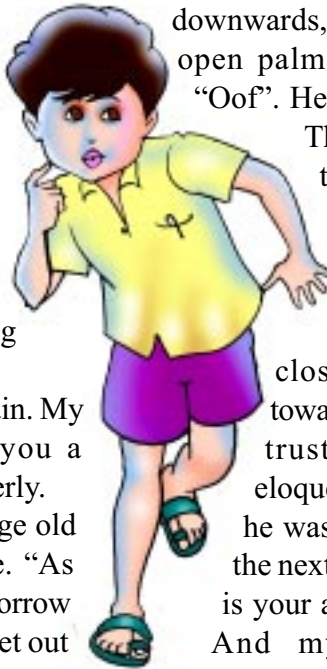
*I never was, am always to be,  
No one ever saw me, nor ever will  
And yet I am the confidence of all  
To live and breathe on this  
terrestrial ball."*

This time, Bobby did not even try to pretend, he did not even want to try to hunt for an answer. His lips curved downwards, he shrugged and, with open palms, let out a vigorous "Oof". He had lost and was lost.

The old man came close to the child and reached out and ruffled his hair. For the first time since their encounter, there was a sudden closeness. Bobby turned towards the old man with big trusting eyes that were eloquent of the torments that he was suffering in regard to the next morrow. "Bobby, here is your answer. It is tomorrow. And my son, never fear tomorrow, look it in the eye, and you'll be the winner." With these words the old man disappeared as if he had never been there at all.

Bobby blinked. Bobby blinked again and this time a golden ray sneaked in between his eyelids. He had reached tomorrow.

**- Parama Ray**





# DARKNESS AT FORENOON

The sun rose in all its glory on Friday, May 19, 1780. The cock crowed and the world woke up to another fine and busy day. Men hurried to work and children scampered to school. In the eastern coast of North America, life rolled on with much verve and zest. Until, something most unexpected happened!

The sun clean disappeared! Yes, it suddenly disappeared around 10 o' clock in the morning for no apparent reason. There was not even a shred of cloud, nor was there any smoke, fog or mist. It was by no means a day of a solar eclipse. Nevertheless, the sun faded out, cloaking a bright morning with an awful chill darkness.

The darkness that began in New York soon spread to Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Maine.

The darkest night engulfed this large region when bright daylight should have reigned over it. So dense was the darkness that Judge Tenny, an eyewitness from New Hampshire, remarked later: "A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eye was equally invisible with the

blackest velvet." Mr. John Davenport, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Connecticut, who was present during this strange occurrence, said: "The effect was that of having one's head encased within the confines of the black hood."

It was the darkest night at noon. Birds sang their evening songs, retired to their nests, and fell silent. Fowls began to roost and the cattle made their way back to the barn. All work came to a standstill. Schools broke up. Parents brought their children home

with the help of burning torches. Candles were lit at noon and the flames shone as at night.

People knew the passing of time only by the clocks and the ringing of the church bells. They were terrified when they found that not a single star was visible in the night sky. It was to be a full-

moon night. But there was no trace of the moon. Only, a strange and eerie greenish light pervaded the darkness.

Awe-struck and bewildered, many had no courage to go to bed. Instead, they prayed for normal conditions to return. For, they feared that there might not be a dawn anymore. This



mysterious and impenetrable darkness, they thought, was perhaps the harbinger of the last day, the Day of Judgement when, according to the Holy Book, “the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.”

*'Twas on a May Day of the old year  
Seventeen hundred eighty, that there  
fell*

*Over the bloom and sweet life of  
spring,*

*Over the fresh earth and the heaven  
of noon,*

*A horror of great darkness...*

Thus sang poet John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), remembering the great dark day of 1780.

But, dawn did break at the expected hour the following day. People heaved sighs of relief. Their hearts leapt up with joy and gratitude when they saw the sun rising again over the horizon.

Scientifically no explanation has yet been found for this remarkable phenomenon. It has remained to this day one of the most puzzling mysteries of all times.



# Know Your India

## QUIZ

The pages of this magazine have frequently carried the stories of our sages and saints. Maybe you have read about them or seen them in movies. Do you remember their names? How familiar are you with their life and work?

1. A princess of India gave up her royal life and became a passionate devotee of Lord Krishna. Who was she?
2. Another devotee of Lord Krishna was a poet and would always sing songs in praise of the Lord. He was blind. Who was he?
3. Who was the saint who propagated the Bhakti Movement in Bengal?
4. Adi Sankaracharya established Maths at five places. Name them.
5. A Tamil poetess was a great devotee of Lord Muruga, who is also called Lord Subramanya. Who was she?
6. A great Muslim saint was a firm believer in the equality of religions. Who was he?
7. Hindus and Muslims worship a great saint with equal devotion. He lived in a place near Ahmednagar. Who was he?
8. Sriperumbudur is generally remembered as the place where the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi attained martyrdom. It was the birthplace of a famous saint. Who was he?

*( Answers next month )*

### ***Answers to February Quiz***

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Raziya Sultana. She ruled for four years.            | 8. M.S. Subbalakshmi  |
| 2. Mother Teresa  | 9. Arundhati Roy, for her novel <i>The God of Small Things</i>          |
| 3. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi                         | 10. Ashapurna Devi, for her Bengali novel <i>Pratham Pratisruti</i> .   |
| 4. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. She held the Health portfolio. | 11. Amrita Sher Gil   |
| 5. Captain Lakshmi                                      | 12. Lata Mangeshkar, for singing the largest number of songs for films. |
| 6. Dr. Annie Besant                                     |   |
| 7. Nargis Dutt  |   |



## Only one can be the best !

*Is it correct to say “one of my best friends?” asks reader M.L. Khurana of Meerut.*

The word ‘best’ is a superlative and should, therefore, refer to only one. “So and so is the best among my friends” would be a correct way to express one’s preference of a friend. However, the usage of superlatives is flexible. For example, “so and so is one of the tallest buildings in the city” will not be wrong, because their respective heights may not vary much. At the same time, Everest will not be “one of the highest peaks”, because it is the highest. However, someone may be the greatest novelist in the world. But it will be more courteous (to others), and discreet to say he is one of the greatest novelists!

*Reader Laxmi Rattan of Berhampore cannot find any difference between “enquiry” and “inquiry”.*

True, because the dictionary gives the same meaning for both. In Britain, both terms are used to derive the same meaning. However, in India, the print media makes a subtle difference. Enquiry will mean simply an attempt to seek information (Ram enquired with the railway station when the train was expected to arrive). Whereas inquiry may indicate an exercise to gather information after, say, an accident, theft, murder, etc. Here inquiry has a larger role, like investigation, though it also is a collection of information.

*Reader Nimmy George of Kottayam wants to know the meaning of the idiom “to burn the candle at both ends”.*

It only means, to expend one’s resources (money) or energy in two different ways. The candle is lit at one end to provide light. If one manages to lit the other end also, probably in a horizontal position, the candle may not provide much of extra light; instead, it may burn off fast. The exercise will be a waste of energy. If one were to work less and earn less and spends more, one can be described as burning the candle at both ends.





❁ **What is the significance of the coloured belts in Karate?**

*Deepu Joseph, Lucknow*

The grade to which a Karate fighter has reached is indicated by the colour of the belt he or she wears. Black belts are given to those who have mastered the combative sport. Students earn brown, blue, green or orange belts as they make progress, the brown belt being one grade lower than black. The beginners are given white belts. Students have also to take written examinations. The most difficult test is how the fighter focuses the entire muscle power of his body into one blow with great force. Karate blows are delivered using hands, fists, elbows, and feet.

❁ **The sky looks blue. Why is it so?**

*Vandana Kuckreja, Ludhiana*

The sky and the sea appear blue-coloured for the same reason. You cup your palms to gather some sea-water when you go to the beach. Does it look blue? No. As the waves reach the sandy shore, does the foam look blue? No. 'White' light is made up of seven primary colours—violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red (vibgyor). Each of the colours has a different wavelength. Six of these colours pass through the atmosphere. However, the blue light bounces off tiny particles of dust in it. When this happens, some of the light is reflected in the direction and makes the sky look blue. The blue of the sky is also reflected in the blue of the sea.

❁ **What is the 'mystery' of a mystery play ?**

*Vamanan Nampoothiri, Palghat*

Once upon a time, stories from the Bible or the lives of Christian saints were staged—mostly in open air, especially during the Middle Ages. The word 'mystery' has its origin in the Latin word *ministerium*, which means religious service. In the beginning, these plays were acted by priests during service at churches. Their place was later on taken over by craftsmen, tradesmen, and other groups who staged them outside the churches. They became a regular event at Christmas and Easter. The plays invariably told the Bible stories in a lively, enjoyable manner.

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*I, **B. Viswanatha Reddi**, do hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.*

1<sup>st</sup> March 2001

B. VISWANATHA REDDI  
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*Click  
a caption*

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**Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other?**

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***Photo Caption Contest, CHANDAMAMA  
(at the address given below)***

to reach us before the 20th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

*Congratulations*

The Prize for the January 2001 contest goes to :

**SHIVANI KAROL**

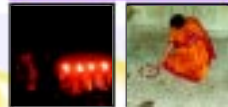
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